

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended.

Applicants appreciate the indication of allowable matter in Claim 2.

Claims 1 and 3 have been cancelled to reduce the issues. Claims 2 and 4 have been rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, Claims 2 and 4 remain pending in the application.

Claims 1, 3 and 4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by newly applied reference Fukushima et al. (U.S. Patent 5,269,198). Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

The rejection of Claims 1 and 3 is now moot by reason of their cancellation. Claim 2 is now allowable as incorporating all limitations of the base claim from which it depended.

As to Claim 4, Applicants respectfully point out that the Fukushima reference fails to disclose a friction torque limiter formed inside an airtight damper to form a conical ring as recited in amended Claim 4. Indeed, the torque limiter element in Fukushima's viscous damper apparatus, as illustrated in Figures 1-3 and described at column 3,

line 54 - column 4, line 29, is not a friction torque limiter at all, much less a friction torque limiter that forms a conical ring as claimed. In particular, each of the torque limiters 51 in Fukushima's invention, as described in detail at column 3, lines 54 - column 4, line 9, includes balls 52, ball engaging concave portions 53, urging spring 55, and collar 37. A plurality of such torque limiters 51 is arranged around the circumference of the damper assembly, as can be seen most clearly in Figure 3. The ball-engaging concave portions 53 are formed on a sliding surface of the annular case 1 (column 65, lines 65-66; Figure 3) and may have, for example, a conical shape (column 3, lines 66-68). Fukushima's structure thus might be regarded to constitute a ring having conical depressions, but it cannot reasonably be deemed a conical ring per se as recited in Claim 4.

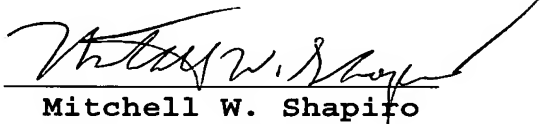
Accordingly, the rejection of Claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) is inappropriate, and the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw it.

In view of the above amendments and discussion, this application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and an early Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been requested separately, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully requested,

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